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ABSTRACT

Local school-to-work intermediaries and national industry associations share the goal of organizing employers to improve learning and career opportunities for young people. Each type of organization has much to offer the other. Local school-to-work intermediaries perform the following essential functions: convene local employers and other leaders; broker and/or provide services to workplace partners, educational institutions, young people, and the youth-serving system; ensure the quality and impact of local efforts; and promote policies to sustain effective practices in particular communities or regions. National industry-based organizations can aggregate the resources and energy of their members to achieve the following goals: recruit new workers into an industry; design programs that prepare young people for a particular industry and for career success extending beyond any one industry; create and disseminate curricula and standards for programs; and create and promote credentials of value to employers. National industry associations offer the following items: quality materials and programming; respected credentials; accelerated dissemination; and national- and state-level advocacy. Local school-to-work intermediaries offer the following items: access to key employers and leaders; local knowledge; pilot sites; and a local voice for advocacy. Greater collaboration between local school-to-work intermediaries and national industry association's promises significant benefits but will require overcoming several challenges, including the following: (1) school priorities often differ those of industry; and (2) local and national groups sometimes compete with employers and other key individuals at the local level. (MN)

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SCHOOL-TO-WORK INTERMEDIARY PROJECT

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FINDING COMMON GROUND: LOCAL INTERMEDIARIES AND NATIONAL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

By Marc S. Miller, Jobs for the Future

Local school-to-work intermediaries and national industry associations share a goal: to organize employers in order to improve learning and career opportunities for young people. With this common purpose, the two types of organizations have a great deal to offer one another. How can they better achieve their potential for mutual benefits—and what obstacles do they face to working together more closely?

At the local level, school-to-work intermediaries connect schools and other youth-preparation organizations with workplaces and other community resources. The goal is to create, support, and enhance programs that combine learning with doing, thereby better preparing young people for further education and for fulfilling careers. These organizations make connections among young people, employers, and schools "happen on the ground" by performing four essential functions. They:

- Convene local employers and other leaders;
- Broker and/or provide services to workplace partners, educational institutions, young people, and the youth-serving system;
- Ensure the quality and impact of local efforts; and
- Promote policies to sustain effective practices in particular communities or regions.

At a national level, many industry-based associations also promote programs that combine learning with doing: for them it is a strategy for raising the quality of the workforce available to members. National, industry-based organizations can aggregate the resources and energy of their members to:

- Recruit new workers into an industry;
- Design programs that prepare young people for a particular industry, as well as for career success that extends beyond any one industry;
- Create and disseminate curricula and standards for programs that can be installed in multiple communities; and
- Create and promote credentials that have value to employers.

Local organizations operate *horizontally*: they establish education-workplace connections within a specific geographic area but across multiple industries and stakeholders. National organizations, which frequently have state or local affiliates, are organized *vertically*: they promote connections in a single industry or group of industries but across the country. Between these two modes are state organizations, which offer a potential link joining the two, drawing on ties to, and knowledge about, the benefits and needs of broad-

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er, national organizations as well as the operations and capacity of local groups and their communities.

At each level, these organizations engage in initiatives to help young people by enabling schools to connect more effectively with employers, yet local and national groups are very different. They relate to different primary constituencies. Moreover, their approaches differ, as do their expertise and experience base. That said, they clearly have the potential to help each other be more effective. What strategies will enable local intermediaries and industry-focused national groups to build upon one another's strengths to better serve young people *and* the need for a workforce prepared for today's economy?

In February 2001, Jobs for the Future, on behalf of the School-to-Work Intermediary Project, organized a national convening to address that question, provide input for this Issue Brief, and ground the discussion in the realities of local practice. The meeting brought together representatives of national and state organizations awarded Employer Investment Grants by the National School-to-Work Office; state organizations awarded Employer Investment Grants; local programs and efforts affiliated with some of these national initiatives; and advisors and staff of the School-to-Work Intermediary Project.

This Issue Brief draws upon the presentations and discussions at that meeting, as well as the experiences of two groups: the Employer Investment Grantees and the members of the Intermediary Network, established by the School-to-Work Intermediary Project. It examines:

- Key opportunities facing efforts to bring local and national/state initiatives into more mutually beneficial partnerships;
- Key challenges facing such efforts; and
- Ways to improve cooperation and links.

Opportunities for Mutual Benefit

Local school-to-work intermediaries and national industry associations make important contributions to connecting school and work by facilitating linkages between employers and schools for the benefit of young people. Efforts to pursue opportunities for mutual benefit begin with the recognition of what each can bring to the table.

What National Industry Associations Offer

Employer Investment Grantees and the members of the Intermediary Network have identified several ways in which industry-based groups organized at the national and state levels can contribute to local efforts to make and manage high-quality connections between education and workplaces:

- Quality materials and programming;
- Respected credentials;
- Accelerated dissemination; and
- National and state-level advocacy.

Quality Materials

Several national Employer Investment Grantees have created well-designed materials that educators, employers, and other community partners can use in designing, implementing, and overseeing local programs connecting work and learning. These products, ranging from complete curricula to marketing packages to professional development programs, are frequently accompanied by technical assistance.

The National Retail Federation's RELE Toolkit is a resource created nationally and designed for local implementation. RELE—Retail Employer Link to Education—is a school-to-career initiative to recognize and strengthen the involvement of retail employers in education programs. RELE created the Tool-

kit to prepare students for successful careers in retailing before they enter the workforce and during their part-time employment. The Toolkit contains guidelines, "turnkey" activities, and resource materials and can be purchased in its entirety or by specialty package.

Through the RELE initiative, state retail associations implement school-to-career programs and tools. For example, RELE launched a Youth Opportunities in Retailing program in Iowa in 1999. Based on a model created by the New Mexico Retail Association, YOR promotes and coordinates partnerships among employers, educators, and students. Significantly, the skills-standard-based curricular resources that the Iowa program supplies are designed to supplement learning tools students need to succeed in any field, not just retailing. YOR also facilitates partnerships among educators, students, and employers within Iowa and provides educators with business speakers and other employer contacts. Recently, the Iowa Retail Foundation was created as a fundraising arm to sustain YOR activities.

Respected Credentials

From the local perspective, materials like those produced by RELE have an inherent advantage: they are based on employers' real needs. By completing industry-developed programs, young people earn credentials that are recognized and valued not just by local employers but throughout the country.

For example, a Hospitality Business Alliance certificate signifies that a student has successfully completed an HBA school-to-career program and is "on the road to management" in the industry. Moreover, because HBA certificate-holders have completed an improved curriculum, many college hospitality programs accept HBA courses for college credit. Similarly, working with educators and retailers, the NRF Foundation has identified retail workplace skills, and the resulting skill standards and certification form the basis of RELE and other workforce development initiatives.

For both the HBA and the NRF Foundation, the goal is a national certification program. Currently, students can earn certificates in several states. For example, based on retail skill standards, the Massachusetts Youth Opportunities in Retailing program awards a certificate of completion that is recognized by retailers across the state who are participating in the program.

This is what young people need: widely recognized credentials that show when they have successfully completed career-focused education programs—and standards that

The NRF Foundation

The NRF Foundation is a center for collecting and disseminating information about retailing. Created in 1981 and affiliated with the National Retail Federation, it conducts research, develops education programs, and promotes awareness of retailing's community involvement.

The foundation's education program promotes retailing as a career at all levels, increases awareness of the progressive paths within the industry, and promotes and disseminates skill standards and certification for national customer service and sales. It also provides competitive scholarships to individuals pursuing postsecondary careers in retailing.

Through the Retail Employer Link to Education, state retail associations help educators, community-based organizations, and employers partner in school-to-career activities. Key strategies of the RELE Initiative include:

- Implementing Youth Opportunities in Retailing (YOR) and the Retail and Education Alliance for Development of Youth (READY);
- Incorporating other appropriate retail, school-to-career, and skill standards initiatives to create an industry-driven, national model for states;
- Engaging state retail associations as key partners to implement the RELE initiative, model programs, and strategies;
- Supporting implementation with technical assistance;
- Establishing state foundations or other supports to sustain the program; and
- Promoting existing best practices and developing additional skill-standards-based tools to assist employers, educators, and intermediaries in school-to-career collaborations.

show what those education programs mean a person can offer to prospective employers. Young people and employers both benefit when students earn *portable* credentials that are meaningful anywhere.

Industry-driven, nationally developed materials can offer a further benefit to local school-to-work systems. Educators and other partners in such systems recognize that a national effort reflects a real investment on the part of participating employers. Local partners can use this demonstrated commitment, as well as the prestige that comes with national affiliations, to open doors to key individuals and organizations in a community.

Some national organizations can facilitate access to many different types of firms. An example is the Manufacturing Industries Careers Alliance, which promotes career opportunities for young people. MICA has created "Making the Connections," a framework of "intermediary" actions that employer associations can take to support their members in school-to-career efforts. MICA devised this framework in consultation with local, state, and national employer associations that are striving to improve school-business communication.

The Manufacturing Industries Careers Alliance: A Network of Networks

The Manufacturing Industries Careers Alliance seeks to address declining student participation in training and preparation for manufacturing careers and to improve the quality of students' training and work-readiness. Its mission is to connect schools and workplaces through alliances that enhance learning and career opportunities for youth, especially in manufacturing.

MICA is a partnership of several national organizations. *The Center for Workforce Success* brings expertise in workforce development and the network of the National Association of Manufacturers, its parent organization. NAM itself is a "network of networks": its members include 48 state business and industry associations, 69 independent local and regional employer and manufacturing associations, and 220 manufacturing industry associations. This network is critical to expanding the MICA initiative and building the involvement of small and mid-sized companies.

Other MICA members include the Institute for Educational Leadership's *Center for Workforce Development*, which focuses on helping leaders in the public and private sectors build bridges that connect individuals with learning institutions and the workplace; *the National Institute for Metalworking Skills*, which supports the development of a skilled workforce for the metalworking industry; and *the Associated Equipment Distributors Foundation*, the educational and workforce development arm of the Associated Equipment Distributors.

Dissemination

Organizations like MICA and the NRF Foundation offer the ability to enhance dissemination of practice and policy and reach a large number of interested stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels. A case in point is the Hospitality Business Alliance, which has the ambitious goal of ensuring that all 50 states participate in school-to-career initiatives by 2005. As a parallel goal, each year HBA seeks to engage 5,000 schools, 100,000 students, 50,000 worksites, and 50,000 mentors.

To reach every state, the HBA applies a two-step strategy: it is establishing a national system of state hospitality partnerships; these state-based education foundations, in turn, establish local school-to-career and industry-mentoring programs. As of February 2001, the HBA had formed 20 state foundations. It provides them with training and a "tool kit" of materials and ideas. Assistance includes public relations strategies that position hotels and restaurants, which are often seen as low-wage, entry-level employers, as responsible community citizens, dedicated to improving young people's opportunities. Moreover, the HBA brings years of experience and a long-term commitment and perspective, promoting the sustainability of state and local efforts.

To further promote dissemination, many national trade associations also offer various forms of financial incentives. For example, the HBA is a source of start-up funds for education foundations; with this seed money, enterprising state initiatives can raise additional funds. Incentives can also include funds tar-

geted at financial aid for young people. Among others, HBA and some RELE state programs include direct assistance for students as part of their package for state and local programs; the NRF Foundation also has a scholarship program for students pursuing postsecondary careers in retailing. From the point of view of educators, this is a valuable asset in building a successful program for young people.

Advocacy

National industry associations advocate for public policies and programs that serve their members' needs. Mobilizing state and local affiliates, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and other employer groups regularly participate in the legislative and rule-making processes in Washington. They apply this expertise to influencing policymaking related to education and workforce development. By operating across industries and nationally, such groups can achieve the scale that makes engagement in advocacy more effective.

As the U.S. Chamber says on its Web site, "It's hard enough to run a business, let alone keep track of what's going on in Washington, D.C. That's why you have the U.S. Chamber to do it for you." The Chamber takes a stand on a wide range of business issues, tracks relevant legislation in Congress, provides information on those bills to Chamber members, and enlists members to participate actively in the Chamber's Grassroots Action Information Network.

As an advocate, the U.S. Chamber's reach is extensive and mobilizes significant resources: the world's largest business federation, it represents 3,000 state and local chambers, 850 business associations, and 87 American chambers abroad. The Center for Workforce Preparation, its nonprofit education and training affiliate, specifically assists local chambers that are committed to school-to-career and other systemic education and training reforms. The center provides information, resources, and networking on a variety of workforce and education issues.

Similarly, MICA advocates nationally for the adoption of industry standards into the curricula of community colleges, technical institutes, and high school vocational programs. It also promotes promising practices by associations and manufacturers around the country and helps these associations develop strategies they can use to meet their members' workforce needs.

As one of its core activities, the National Employer Leadership Council, managed by the National Alliance of Business, advocates for school-to-career initiatives combining classroom courses and real-life learning to ensure that all students meet high standards and are prepared for continuing education and cut-

The Hospitality Business Alliance

The National Restaurant Association and the American Hotel and Motel Association formed the Hospitality Business Alliance, an educational partnership that is creating a nationwide system of high school hospitality courses linked with mentored workplace experiences. HBA's mission is to alleviate the hospitality industry' shortage of qualified employees by cultivating new sources of talent.

HBA efforts are designed to:

- Increase recruitment significantly for the hospitality industry;
- Recognize the hospitality industry as the "industry of choice" as young people select a career;
- Ensure that everyone in the hospitality industry and in high schools across the country is involved in, or at least familiar with, school-to-career efforts or other public/private-sector partnerships;
- Establish the highest school-to-career standards and quality for hospitality curricula and internships;
- Articulate national agreements with colleges offering hospitality curricula;
- Promote scholarships for school-to-career graduates; and
- Coordinate events to recognize contributions to workforce development initiatives

ting-edge jobs. The NELC supports efforts combining academic courses with real-life learning that improves student achievement.

What Locals Intermediaries Offer

From the perspective of national organizations, joining their efforts with those of local intermediaries can yield significant benefits. Local intermediaries offer:

- Access to key employers and leaders;
- Local knowledge;
- Pilot sites; and
- A local voice for advocacy.

Access to Key Employers and Leaders

National associations have access to leading employers across the country, but in most cities they lack close relations with the business community as a whole. Local employers may feel more comfortable dealing with local organizations and people they know than with national or state associations. School-to-work intermediaries and other local collaborations to improve opportunities for young people often have access to, credibility with, and knowledge about key individuals in a community—and not just employers but educators, community leaders, and government officials as well.

The Capital Area Training Foundation considers engaging employers to be one of its major functions as it brokers between employers and schools to facilitate school-to-career and workforce development activities in the Austin, Texas, region. Created in 1994, CATF is based on the view that employers are more likely to invest and participate in work-based learning and education reforms through an employer-led intermediary. This grounding in the private sector sets CATF apart from many local partnerships, which are often dominated by educators.

CATF staff members, together with volunteers, support industry-sector steering committees and regional events. These efforts engage employers and educators in: designing career pathways; providing work-based learning experiences to students and teachers; and linking employers directly with students, teachers, schools and postsecondary institutions. Overall, CATF engages over 500 employers in working with 14 school districts, with a total of 150,000 students.

Local Knowledge

The experience of local organizations extends beyond contacts and access with key individuals. Just as important, local organizations bring, often through the experience of those individuals, practical knowledge of the local education and workforce development systems and of the types of education needed for an individual to succeed in the local labor market.

This local knowledge has proven important in Sacramento, California, where LEED

Capital Area Training Foundation

Created in 1994, the Capital Area Training Foundation in Austin, Texas, is an employer-driven intermediary that facilitates school-to-career and workforce development activities. About half of its efforts concern youth development through school-to-career support. CATF also places a priority on adult transitions to work, especially welfare-to-work projects. It engages in similar strategies for both youth and adult workforce issues.

Eleven CATF staff members engage in school-to-career efforts, and the annual budget for this work is over $1 million. Among its activities, CATF has implemented a regional summer internship and job initiative: in 2000, it collaborated with the City of Austin, Travis County, the local Workforce Investment Board, 11 school districts, and over 350 employers to facilitate 2,600+ jobs and internships for youth. The initiative is being repeated in 2001.

CATF has also generated $1.5 million for a regional Accelerated Careers in Electronics education/workforce development/school-to-career initiative with semiconductor firms. In addition, it operates a privately funded, automotive technology workforce development effort and has launched a regional health care workforce development alliance with high schools, hospitals, and Austin Community College

(Linking Education and Economic Development) has engaged employers by using industry-based skills standards. Industry skills standards are often central to the process of connecting education and workplaces, and LEED has made them the basis for restructuring educational curricula and programs, supporting entrance into careers, and planning economic development efforts.

Staff members of LEED started with banking and telecommunications skill standards funded by the California Business Roundtable and California Department of Education in 1994. LEED convened representatives of 15 financial institutions, ranging from small banks to the Bank of America and Wells Fargo; this group endorsed the state-level standards as appropriate for the Sacramento region. LEED then brought together teachers from several schools to receive training about the standards and develop integrated curricula based on them. Eventually, this effort led LEED to adopt other skills standards and laid the groundwork for strategies it has adopted for its intermediary work in general.

Today, all high schools in LEED partner districts use skills standards for academies and pathways and to guide curriculum development. LEED engages about 200 employers directly and almost 1,500 indirectly. It has recruited over 135 employers to participate on industry consortia related to industry skills standards. For students in the career academies and career pathways, over 500 employers provide work-based learning opportunities that are tied directly to skills standards. LEED has trained over 60 worksite supervisors to manage and expand these work-based learning opportunities, placed over 6,000 learners in such opportunities, and significantly increased the number offered each year. LEED has also involved employers in working with educators on integrating school curricula and courses with skills standards.

Pilot Sites

When a national organization seeks to develop products for wide use, it needs local organizations to test and refine these curricula, implementation strategies, benchmarking methodologies, professional development packages, and so on. It is the experience of local "beta test sites" that determines which models and materials work best when implemented in real schools and real communities.

The Home Builders Institute, which brings together the broad range of industries connected to home building, has used three test sites in creating a curriculum and other products that enable education and business to work together. As the educational and training arm of the National Association of Home Builders, HBI drew on its large network of affiliates in picking the sites to pilot its new curriculum and help develop replication materials.

HBI uses the construction of a home as the focal point for student involvement in

LEED-Sacramento

LEED-Sacramento (Linking Education and Economic Development) is a coalition of leaders from business, education, labor, government, and the community. It focuses on providing:

- All students with education and career possibilities;
- Businesses with workforce development opportunities;
- The community with economic advantages by creating an educated, skilled workforce.

LEED's mission is "to develop and support partnerships with business, education, government and the community to strengthen the Sacramento Regional Economy through dramatic improvement in education and training."

LEED provides oversight for the Sacramento Regional School-to-Career Alliance. It also organizes and manages regional industry consortia, including: the Sacramento Regional High-Tech Consortium, the Sacramento Regional Banking & Financial Services Consortium, and the Sacramento Health Employers & Educators Consortium.

school-to-work activities. Its curriculum—"Building a House to Build Careers"—integrates construction-related concepts into classroom-based instruction to introduce students to all aspects of the industry, as well as to skills that are required across occupational lines. In the 1999-2000 school year, HBI launched the pilot, forming partnerships between the National Association of Home Builders and local Home Builder Associations at an urban site in Tallahassee, a suburban site in Indianapolis, and a rural site in Grain Valley, near Kansas City, Missouri.

As part of the pilot, HBI involved industry in developing high school curricula. Builders and educators came together to write contextual learning modules that blend high school course content from all subject areas with the broad range of career options available in the home-building industry. The participation of the members of local Home Builder Associations has provided educational resources for students, as well as a platform that enables schools to enhance learning opportunities for construction-technology programs.

The initial evidence from the Home Builders Institute is that the young people in the program choose to go further in education because of it. Because the HBI pilot program's career paths extend beyond traditional craft/skill arenas, it has attracted both college-bound and non-college-bound youth to the industry. HBI had hoped to reach at least 30 students at each site. At the Florida site, 18 teachers exposed the program to all their students, reaching over 500 students in Tallahassee alone.

The two-year pilot ends in September 2001, with the transition to a replication program. In the fall of 2001, HBI will conduct school-to-work program training sessions for Home Builder Associations in each of its five regions. At these sessions, the Home Builder Associations will receive curricula and replication materials for creating and implementing local workforce development initiatives through school-based education and training programs.

A Local Voice for Advocacy

Policy is made primarily at the state and national levels, but local groups provide the real-world experience upon which to ground effective policies—and a voice for advocating for those policies. In California, school-to-work advocates have mounted and coordinated local efforts to influence how the state allocates resources for education and workforce development. This grassroots campaign has begun to move California to build on the federal school-to-work investment by providing state resources for the connecting activities of local partnerships.

The campaign began with the formation of the California School-to-Career Policy Network, a grassroots committee to build local support for state-level action to promote and fund key school-to-work principles and activities. The goal of the network, representing all 47 local partnerships in California, was to convince the state government to provide leadership that would both enable and catalyze an expansion of school-to-career opportunities to all students. The network also developed a briefing paper for partnerships to use as a vehicle for raising local awareness of the benefits and elements of a school-to-work system. This grassroots activity paralleled a priority of the state school-to-work office: changing attitudes during California's last two years of federal funding.

In August 2000, the California legislature voted to fund local partnerships, with support for their convening, connecting, measurement, and service-provision functions. With an initial appropriation of $2 million, the legislation formalized the interagency partnership

established through California's school-to-career plan and placed it in the Office of the Secretary of Education.

Challenges to Collaboration

The advantages of greater collaboration are significant. However, there are several obstacles to combining local and national strategies for connecting school and work.

The credibility, testing, and branding that comes with "packaged" programs and materials must be balanced with local priorities.

Educators, and others, understandably resist reforms that are "not invented here." Indeed, it would make little sense to follow blindly the national lead and adopt either "cookie-cutter" curricula or materials developed elsewhere for other purposes.

Nevertheless, many national organizations, sensitive to this issue, seek to design into their models the capacity for adaptation to local conditions, experience, and knowledge. Moreover, they can design the implementation of those models in ways that build ownership among educators and workplace partners. For example, the Home Builders Institute is creating a flexible structure for education and business to work together. Its pilot curriculum is modular, making it easy for a community to both replicate the program and customize it as needed.

School priorities often differ from those of industry.

Potentially divergent interests pose a more difficult challenge. Industry associations are interested in recruitment: for many, their primary goal is improving the pipeline of qualified employees to their own industries. Educators focus on academic goals and career exploration: they seek to improve academic opportunities for young people, creating postsecondary options that span careers and may lead to postsecondary education before the labor market.

This difference in priorities can be overcome. Industry trade associations and local intermediary organizations can benefit from collaborating with each other, as has been demonstrated above. The key to greater collaboration is to focus on common goals—to understand one another's needs, identify opportunities to assist each other, and balance the interests of the community with those of each industry.

Enhanced dialogue among national associations might help bridge some of these natural gaps. Multi-industry employer associations, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Alliance of Business, might facilitate such discussions. Indeed, improved communication might also help align various national efforts with one another. The value-added can come in marketing, credentialing, advocacy, recruiting, and connecting to local efforts.

Local and national groups sometimes compete for contacts with employers and other key individuals at the local level.

Joining forces to gain access makes sense in recruitment as well as in setting priorities, and local intermediaries often foster easy and non-competitive ways to collaborate. By coordinating employer engagement, the participation of business in local education initiatives can be more productive and efficient for both employers and for the schools. In return for relinquishing some control over contacts with their local members, national employer associations receive much better and deeper access to classrooms.

The hospitality industry offers an example of how aligning existing local and national efforts can strengthen both. On the local level, Austin's Capital Area Training Founda-

tion builds its school-to-work programs around employer-led bodies in six sectors, one of which is hospitality. For each sector, a steering committee has connections with local members of national groups engaged in connecting schools and workplaces. Thus, the Hospitality Steering Committee collaborates with the Austin Hotel Motel Association, a member of the American Hotel and Motel Association. Clearly, this would mesh well with the goals of the Hospitality Business Alliance, as it seeks to create a nationwide system of high school hospitality courses linked with mentored workplace experiences.

Next Steps

Across the country, local intermediaries are helping communities improve the connections among young people, educational institutions, and local economies. Many of these collaborative relationships have operated for several years and, in experimenting with different ways to organize and sustain connections to workplaces and other local resources for learning, they have accumulated a body of valuable experience about what works—and what doesn't. Specifically, they have identified several areas in which national trade associations might better connect their employer-engagement efforts with those of local intermediaries.

The Potential for State Organizations to Bridge National and Local Efforts

State organizations can form a crucial link between the resources provided by national trade associations and the implementation that takes place in communities. For example, state associations are critical to the national dissemination strategies of the Hospitality Business Alliance and the retail industry's RELE Initiative. Similarly, groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce rely on state affiliates to distribute national materials and to communicate local needs to offices in Washington.

Some employer groups are organized specifically at the state level. With 10,000 members, primarily small to medium-sized employers, the Connecticut Business and Industry Association is the nation's largest state-wide business service organization. Through its non-profit affiliate, the CBIA Education Foundation, the association creates and supports effective school-business partnerships that help develop a qualified, skilled workforce. The foundation helps local employer associations and individual firms recruit employers for school-to-career initiatives and strengthen employer involvement in them (see box).

Partnerships for Evidence and Learning

Enhanced collaboration between national associations and local intermediaries can increase the quality and value of evidence about school-to-work implementation

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A State Intermediary: The Connecticut Business and Industry Association

The Connecticut Business and Industry Association develops processes and tools for involving the state's employers in school-to-career activities, yet it believes that it is critical to build *local* employer capacity for partnerships with schools. Toward that end, CBIA established a program of School-to-Career Employer Incentive Grants to help local and regional intermediaries in their efforts to involve employers in school-to-career. The grants formed a major component of CT Learns, Connecticut's school-to-career initiative, which began in 1997-98. The grant program, which operated for several years, is an example of a state-level intermediary activity that serves and works through other intermediaries at the state and regional level.

All recipients of the Employer Incentive Grants have used school-to-career tools that CBIA developed as part of CT Learns. These include eight Connecticut Industry Skills Standards booklets, developed by committees of educators and industry and community representatives. The booklets outline academic, employability, and technical skills necessary for specific job categories. Upon completing a school-to-career program, students can acquire a Connecticut Career Certificate, a portable credential attesting to mastery of academic, employability, and technical skills in one of the eight clusters.

Employer Investments Funded by the National School-to-Work Office

For more information on these grantees, go to: www.stw.ed.gov/grants/employer2.htm.

National Grantees

Automotive Youth Educational Systems, Inc., 2701 Troy Center Drive, Suite 450, Troy, MI 48054, (248)273-1202, Fax: (248)273-1201, www.ayes.org

Home Builders Institute: 1090 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005, (202)371-0600; Fax: (202)898-7777, www.hbi.org

Hospitality Business Alliance: 250 South Wacker Drive, Suite 1400, Chicago, IL 60606, (312)715-5387, Fax: (312)466-1596, www.h-b-a.org

National Alliance of Business: 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005, (202)289-2888, Fax: (202)289-1303 www.itaa.org/workforce/programs/stw.htm

National Retail Federation: 325 7th Street, NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20004, (202)783-7971; Fax: (202)737-2849, www.nrf.com

Institute for Educational Leadership: 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036, (202)822-8405, ext. 103; Fax: (202)872-4050, www.nam.org/workforce/MICA/mica.html

Utility Business Education Coalition: 1035 Sterling Road, Suite 203-A, Herndon, VA 20170, (703)391-0033, Fax: (703)391-0088/0066, www.ubec.org

Local/Regional Grantees

Connecticut Business and Industry Council: 350 Church Street, Hartford, CT 06103, (860)244-1900, Fax: (860)278-8562, www.cbia.com

Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce: 300 E. Michigan, Suite 300, Lansing, MI 48933, (517)487-6340, ext. 30, Fax: (517)484-6910

Linking Education and Economic Development-Sacramento: 2710 Gateway Oaks Dr., South Building, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95833, (916)641-4180, Fax (916)920-6009, www.leed.org

Rhode Island Seafood Council: 212 Main Street, Suite 3, Wakefield, RI 02879, (401)783-4200, Fax: (401)789-9727

Washington Software Alliance (Information Technology Consortium): 3101 Northup Way, Suite 250, Bellevue, WA 98004-1449, (206)448-3033, ext. 187, Fax: (206)448-3103

Additional Grants for National Organizing

Center for Workforce Preparation, U.S. Chamber of Commerce: 1615 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20062-2000, (202)463-5525; Fax: (202)822-2468, www.uschamber.com

Jobs for the Future: 88 Broad Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02110 (617)728-4446, Fax: (617)728-4857, www.jff.org (in collaboration with New Ways to Work, 785 Market Street, Suite 950, San Francisco, CA 94103, (415)995-9860, Fax: (415)995-9867, www.nww.org)

National Alliance of Business and National Employer Leadership Council: 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005, (800)360-NELC; Fax: (202)289-1303, www.nelc.org

outcomes. As the examples presented here illustrate, national organizations bring the resources needed to look broadly in collecting and sharing information related to such crucial topics as accessing and developing effective curricula, creating and managing connections with postsecondary institutions, and engaging the stakeholders in local education or workforce development efforts.

Moreover, national organizations themselves produce resources that are designed specifically to be used locally—whether by schools, employers, or others in the local partnership. And, of course, many local organizations produce valuable materials and amass significant practical experience that national groups can disseminate and promote more broadly.

The bottom line is that national trade associations can help local intermediaries avoid costs involved in reinventing wheels. In particular, all stakeholders in a school-to-work system require evidence of what works—and what doesn't—and they apply that information to yield benefits that are both practical and political. For example, to sustain *and* improve local programs, the Hospitality Business Alliance is amassing a national database of outcomes for youth, looking at what works and what doesn't in the local programs it stimulates. Similarly, the Home Builders Institute has collected "return on investment" data from its pilot sites on the program's impact, which might help other communities decide to adopt the curriculum.

Reliable research serves to guide practice *and* to foster a better environment for implementing and sustaining positive change. Good research guides the selection of priority tasks and the next steps in the reform process, and it identifies practices and designs that lay the groundwork for improved student outcomes. Moreover, a well-designed, ongoing process of collecting and analyzing data on both progress and ultimate impact can protect and nurture innovation at every stage of the process.

To date, national employer associations have looked primarily to their own affiliates as sites for testing and implementing programs. Their access to student populations, the impact of their efforts, and the quality of the research data would be enhanced significantly by also collaborating with the broadly based, effective local partnerships established in many communities.

The Need for Better Communication and Exchange

As already noted, the ongoing sharing of information and perspectives can help address competition over contacts with employers. Not only that, greater and more regular exchange can improve strategy and implementation.

National organizations, such as the National Employer Leadership Council, are best situated for fostering this dialogue: they can provide opportunities for local intermediaries to learn from one another and to gain access to knowledge of practices and policies developed around the country. National organizations can identify and create opportunities for local groups to learn with and from each other and to strengthen their connections to industry associations in ways that help sustain and enhance their efforts.

The School-to-Work Intermediary Project

The School-to-Work Intermediary Project is designed to strengthen and raise the public profile of local organizations that connect schools, workplaces, and other community resources.

www.intermediarynetwork.org

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